# WHAT WE DO AT WHOLE

**IF YOU PICK UP this magazine without knowing what *Whole Earth Review* is about, you'll probably be surprised. Yes, we do regularly publish articles about ecology. But that's only part of the mix. It isn't easy to pin us down by looking over the table of contents.**

Twenty years ago, Stewart Brand's statement of purpose for the *Whole Earth Catalog* was:

> "We are as gods and might as well get good at it. So far remotely done power and glory — as via government, big business, formal education, church — has succeeded to the point where gross defects obscure actual gains. In response to this dilemma and to these gains, a realm of intimate, personal power is developing — the power of individuals to conduct their own education, find their own inspiration, shape their own environment, and share the adventure with whoever is interested. Tools that aid this process are sought and promoted by the *Whole Earth Catalog*."

We still believe that. But we're a different team and it's a different world. We think we can be more precise about "tools that aid this process." So the *Whole Earth Review* staff has thought and talked and composed this statement of purpose. We're eager to hear what you think of it.

- **We are dedicated to demystification, to self-teaching, and to encouraging people to think for themselves. Thus our motto: "Access to tools and ideas."**

Tools in the Whole Earth sense include hammers, books, and computer conferencing systems. Our readers are a community of tool-users who share information with one another. The ideas we make accessible have not often been found in university courses, but are becoming recognized as part of what you need to know to be truly educated. Our readers contribute to the editorial content as well, with both reviews and articles.

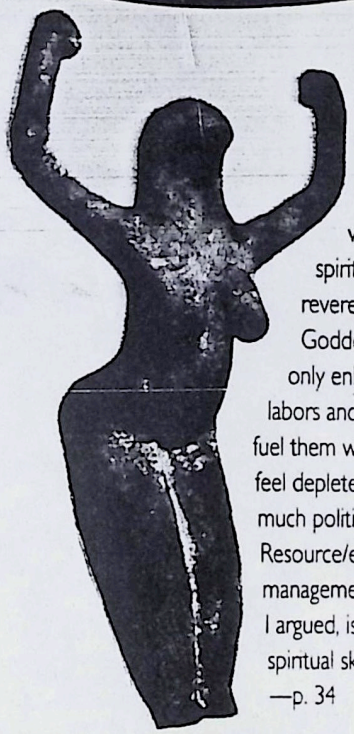
- **We recommend rather than attack.**

Our magazine is an evaluation and access device. It can help you discover what is worth getting and how to get it. We're here to point, not to sell. We have no financial obligation or connection to any of the suppliers reviewed. We only review stuff we think is great. Why waste your time with anything else?

- **We change with the times that we help change.**

Our publications are a call to, and support for, individual action. The first *Whole Earth Catalogs* were aimed at the so-called counterculture, the back-to-the-land folks who were attempting to live as much as possible outside the system. As we hoped, many of the attributes of the counterculture movement became mainstream, especially ecological issues and related concern with energy efficiency. Our publications have been

## IN THIS ISSUE



I have been an activist for twenty years and a witch for much longer. I have grown old trying to convince and teach feminist and mainstream women that spirituality and reverence for the Goddess would only enhance their labors and, in fact, fuel them when they feel depleted by too much political work. Resource/energy management, I argued, is a spiritual skill. —p. 34

**The most valuable contribution of the 1980s computer industry was not a machine, but an idea — the principle of open architecture. —p. 72**

# EARTH REVIEW

influential. But we don't spend much time thinking about the same things we thought about in the sixties, and neither do our readers. This magazine and our catalogs progressed from being part of a social movement to being a trusted reference like a good encyclopedia. We update ourselves continually.

- **By not accepting display advertising, we have extraordinary editorial freedom to publish anything we think our readers need to know.**

Conventional magazines exist and profit because they can deliver readers to advertisers; subscriptions are a much less important source of income. Most magazines fish for readers and feed them to advertisers. We fish for information and feed it to readers, who sustain us with their subscriptions. For readers, this means unobstructed and challenging editorial material and unbiased reviews.

- **We're not a "political" magazine.**

We are committed to providing political tools and new ways of thinking about politics, but we are not a forum for partisan politics.

- **We are deliberately eclectic.**

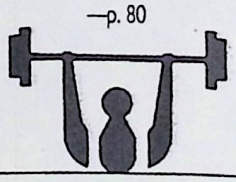
Our content is addressed to many communities of readers who lead different kinds of lives, and who may disagree with one another about many things. We provide tools for environmental activists; we give technology-watchers and tinkerers a window on tomorrow's scientific trends. Our readers are men and women, young and old, urban and rural, from all around the world. They like to have their worldviews expanded and their assumptions challenged. They don't mind taking the time to read, to think, and to discuss new ideas. We offer tools for generalists.

—The Staff of *Whole Earth Review*

The red glow on the rows of tombstones was surreal beyond words. Trees surrounding the cemetery dripped flaming embers like rotten fruit from hell. An overcast of smoke drifted across the rising moon and a gentle rain of ash settled over all. It was worlds away from the quiet Sunday lunch with friends that had started my afternoon. —p. 4

**The only place David always wins against Goliath is in the Bible story. Too often, grassroots activists are emerging from advisory boards and work groups without even their slingshots intact. —p. 18**

Everybody expected that the first true child born of the electronic computer would be the robot, a metal man to stand at the pinnacle of machine evolution. Today, more than a generation after computers appeared on a mass scale, the dominant image of robots is still that of an artificial human being, usually recognizably male. —p. 80



**In the inevitable crisis the inefficient, top-heavy organizations will not survive. The survivors will be different from the organizations of today. —p. 86**

**For** the last 30 years in America, individual investment has been shrinking to negligible importance, at least when it comes to influencing what corporations do. The power has passed not to overseas investors, but to the simultaneously powerful and impotent new institution of pension funds. —p. 94